

CSP Mini-Lesson 11, Spring 2008

Mini-Lesson Standards: (1) Receives, interprets, and responds to verbal and nonverbal messages in a manner appropriate to a given situation, (2) Organizes ideas and communicates orally in a clear, concise, and courteous manner, (3) Identifies problems, alternative solutions, consequences of alternative solutions, and uses appropriate techniques to resolve given problems, (4) Performs effectively in various environments with people of different ages, genders, cultures, socio-economic backgrounds, attitudes, and abilities.

Mini-Lesson Correlations: Customer service, thinking, communication, interpersonal skills

Everyone is a Customer

A customer is anyone who uses the services or product of another person, company, or any type of group. Have you ever thought of the following as customers?

- You are your school's customer because the school offers you a product - your education.
- Fans at a rock concert are the band's customers.
- A patient is the doctor's customer.
- Drivers are a road repair crew's customers.
- The town's citizens are the mayor's customers.

Everyone is a Customer (Continued)

Who are the customers for each person or group named below?

1. A religious leader or minister

2. The Chamber of Commerce in your town

3. A runner in a marathon

4. A firefighter for a town

5. The president of the U.S.

6. A department head in a company

Why Customers Buy

Customers buy for two primary reasons: (1) to feel good and (2) to find solutions to problems. To understand why companies want their customers to feel good, think of the reasons you purchase certain clothes. Do you buy because the fabric is serviceable, because the workmanship is high quality, or because the garment will be long lasting? Probably not.

You buy because the color and style of a garment look great on you, bring out your best features, and will be admired by your friends. In short, the article will make you feel good when you wear it.

Your job as an employee is to make the customers feel good about buying from your company. This is true whether you work in sales, a back office, the laboratory, or another position.

Buying Because It Feels Good

How can the employees named below make their customers feel good about buying their product or service?

1. A plumber: Assure the customer that the repair being made will fix the problem. Leave a phone number and ask the customer to call right away if he or she is dissatisfied with the work in any way. Clean up any residue remaining on the customer's floor or any fingerprints left on the customer's walls.

Why Customers Buy (Continued)

2. A wedding reception DJ

3. A personal trainer

4. A veterinarian

5. A telephone operator

6. A police officer

7. A waiter

Why Customers Buy (Continued)

Buying to Solve a Problem

Sometimes it's a solution to a problem that a customer needs. Unfortunately, the problem the customer identifies may just be the surface issue. You will have to figure out the real problem. For example:

- If a student says to a librarian, "I need a good book for a book report," he may really mean, "I need to make a good grade on this book report, so please recommend a book I'll like and one I can write a good report about."
- When a customer states to an automobile mechanic, "Please fix my car," she really means, "My car is frustrating me because it doesn't run right. Please help me get rid of my frustration."
- A mother who asks the owner of a day care center what services it will provide for her 3-year-old son is really asking, "How will this day care center keep my child happy and safe so I can work without worrying about him?"
- A customer who calls the electric company about an incorrect bill is asking, "How much service did I use last month? Why is the cost of the service higher than I expected?"

Why Customers Buy (Continued)

You will progress faster in your career if you are recognized as a person who provides good customer service. However, in order to offer good service, you will have to analyze what the customer says, then decide what the underlying need, want, or problem really is. The following situations will give you a chance to practice this skill. Write a few words to describe the actual need, want, or problem.

1. A customer asks a computer technician how quickly he can repair her computer.

2. An elderly patient asks a physical therapist to help with her "awful arthritis problem."

3. A client says to a hair stylist, "Give me a good cut."

4. A project manager says to a bridge structural engineer, "Give me a design for a strong and stable bridge."

Instructor's Guide

Companies around the world spend millions of dollars trying to please their most important asset—their customers. A large part of this money goes to train employees in good customer service skills. Advise your students of the importance of outstanding customer service.

To expand the lesson, ask students to think of the last transaction they made, whether it was a purchase of lunch or something else. Instruct them to rank the customer service as Poor, Average, or Excellent and to explain why they gave this rating. Write on the board some of the descriptive words they use. At the end of the activity, circle words that were mentioned several times. Point out that they have just produced a list of what pleases customers. To further expand the lesson, give the short True/False quiz below:

1. Stores and restaurants are the main places where customer service is important. T F
2. To give good customer service, you only have to be courteous and friendly. T F
3. If you're not a "people person" you can't learn to give good customer service. T F
4. If the product a company sells is excellent, customer service is not too important. T F
5. Customer service skill comes naturally. T F

Solutions to Activities

Everyone is a customer

Students may name additional customers for each group. Their answers will provide an opportunity for discussion.

1. A religious leader or minister: the congregation, the community
2. The Chamber of Commerce in your town: Members who pays dues, the town
3. Marathon runner: People who sponsor the runner, the organization that set up the event
4. A firefighter for a town: The local citizens
5. The president of the U.S.: All citizens in the country
6. The department head in a company: Employees in the department and the heads of other departments.

Why Customers Buy - Because It Feels Good

1. A plumber: Assure the customer that the repair being made will fix the problem.
2. A wedding reception DJ: Ask the bride and groom to describe the type of music they like best. Provide for their approval a list of the songs chosen. Call a few weeks before the wedding to confirm date, time, and arrangements.

Solutions to Activities (Continued)

Why Customers Buy – Because It Feels Good

3. A personal trainer: Describe to the client the expected results of the training. Provide a plan of activities. Encourage the client. Affirm the client's success.
4. A veterinarian: Show concern for both the pet and the owner. Explain clearly what treatment will be provided. Call after a day or two to follow up on the pet's condition.
5. A telephone customer service operator: Use a pleasant voice. Be patient, friendly, and courteous. Answer all questions honestly. Hang up when asked without pestering the recipient of the call.
6. A police officer: Be friendly, non-intimidating, and courteous. Explain the situation and answer questions fully.
7. A waiter: Provide excellent service. Ask if the food is as expected.

Solutions to Activities (Continued)

Why Customers Buy - Solve My Problem

1. Computer Technician: The customer needs to use the computer and cannot do his/her job effectively until the computer is repaired.
2. Physical Therapist: The patient wants to be able to walk. The patient wants the pain to be eliminated or reduced.
3. Hair Stylist: The client wants a cut that will make him/her look attractive.
4. Engineer: The project manager wants a bridge that drivers can go over safely.
5. Truck Driver: The customer wants the produce to be fresh when it is delivered; if the trip takes too long, the produce will wilt.

Instructor's Guide T/F quiz: All statements are false.

Related Materials

Activities in this lesson are similar to the material found in *It's for Real Workplace Ethics, NEW Series III* available for fall classes. Samples will be available by the end of March. Please contact us if you would like to be placed on the list for a sample at csp@careersolutionspublishing.com or (888) 299-2784.